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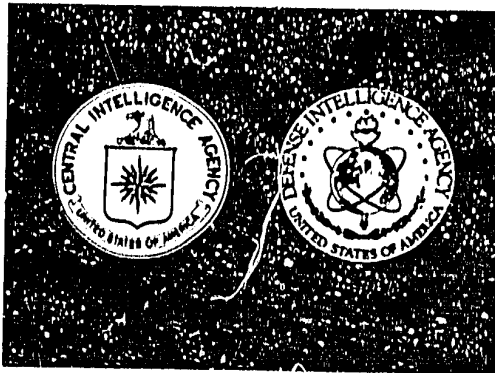
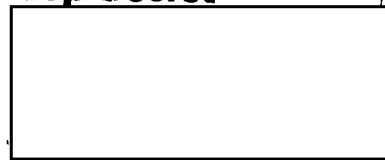
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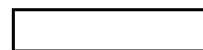
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Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

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August 15, 1974

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**SURVEY OF COMMUNIST
MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA***

(This report covers the period
August 1-14, 1974)

The Key Points

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- During the past few weeks, Communist tactical activity in northern South Vietnam has surged to the highest level this year, and several indicators point to even sharper attacks. A detailed discussion of the Status of Military Forces in South Vietnam at Annex B concludes that RVNAF is capable of coping with the expected new attacks.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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Preface

This report summarizes evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant Communist combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

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Redeployments

3. A detailed discussion of recent NVA and ARVN deployments and the military situation in South Vietnam are included at Annex B.

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II. Communist-Initiated Activity in South Vietnam

10. Military activity slackened somewhat in MR 1 during the past two weeks, but picked up in the western highlands as the Communists initiated sharp attacks in Pleiku and Binh Dinh Provinces. Overall, Communist cease-fire violations dropped during the past two weeks to a daily average of 99 incidents, compared with an average of 125 the previous two weeks. The casualty rate for government and Communist forces also dropped to a daily average of 44 and 191, respectively.

11. In MR 1, Communist forces shelled Da Nang Air Base on August 6, resulting in minor damage and light casualties. They also captured a district capital, Thuong Duc, in the southern half of the Quang Nam Province on August 7 in heavy fighting, which has caused heavy casualties on both sides. Government forces have been able to contain the advances of the present NVA force structure in the province. The Communists also launched ground probes and attacks-by-fire against government positions in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces, capturing several outposts and gradually eroding government influence.

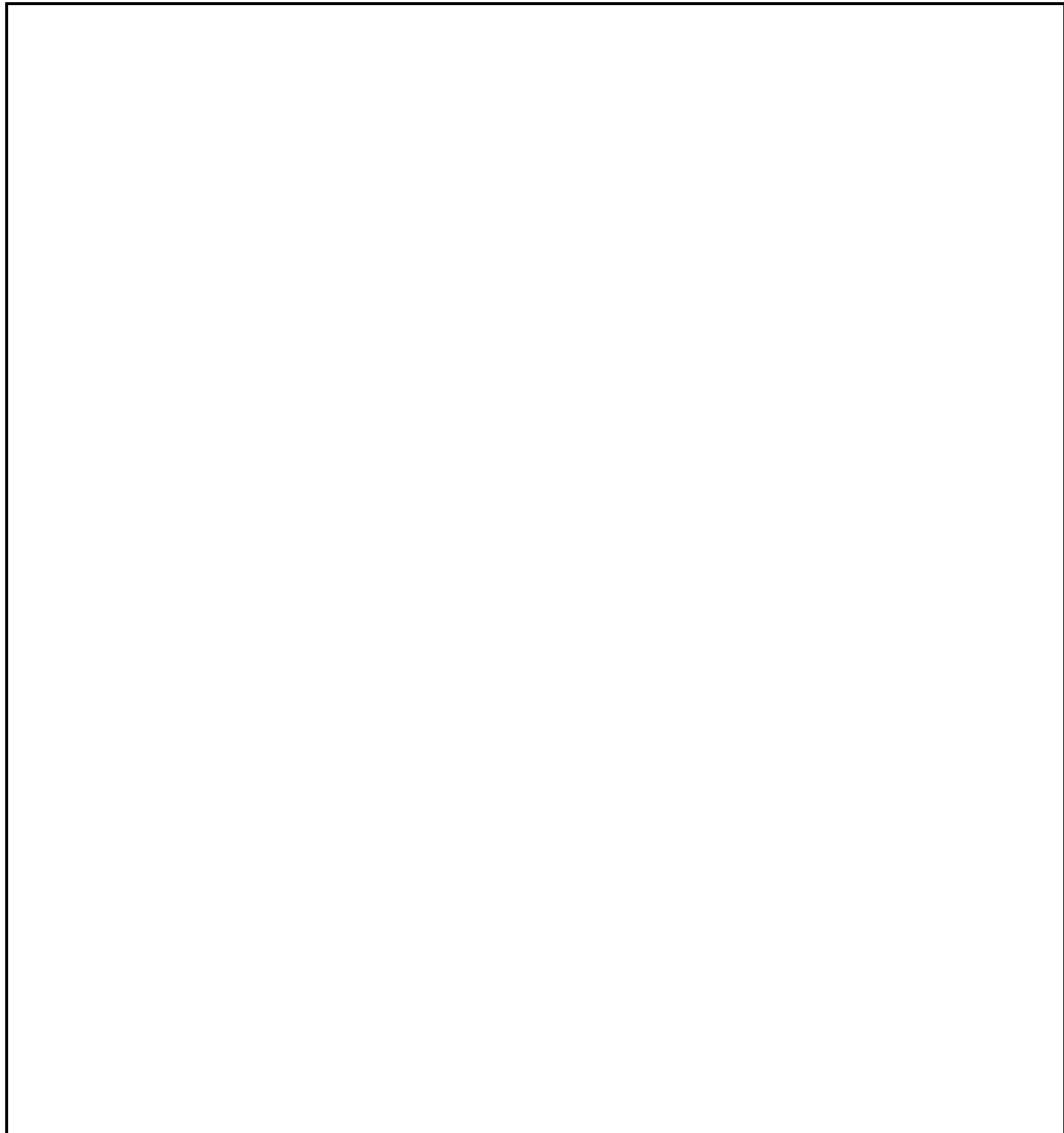
12. Communist forces in MR 2 have increased their pressure on ARVN forces in the vicinity of Plei Me, about 25 miles south of Pleiku City, through heavy attacks-by-fire and ground probes. Government forces lost fire support base 711 on August 6, but recaptured it the next day. The segment of Route 1 located in Binh Dinh Province, which was occupied by Communist forces on July 26, was reopened on August 7.

13. In MR 3, Communist forces launched several attacks-by-fire against the Bien Hoa Air Base, but caused little damage. On August 14, Communist forces

launched tank-supported attacks against government positions in Tay Ninh and Binh Duong Provinces. These attacks may be the beginning of an expected upsurge by main force units in MR 3.

14. Activity in MR 4 was at a low level.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities



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22. [redacted] a new military command designated the "Third Region" - probably a reference to another corps - will be formed in the coastal area of central South Vietnam. The "third corps" will include the NVA 2d Division, the 52d Brigade (reportedly scheduled to be expanded to a division), and three unidentified regiments. The precise date for the activation of the new military command and division is not known. Some reporting, however, suggests that the plan may be completed by early 1975.

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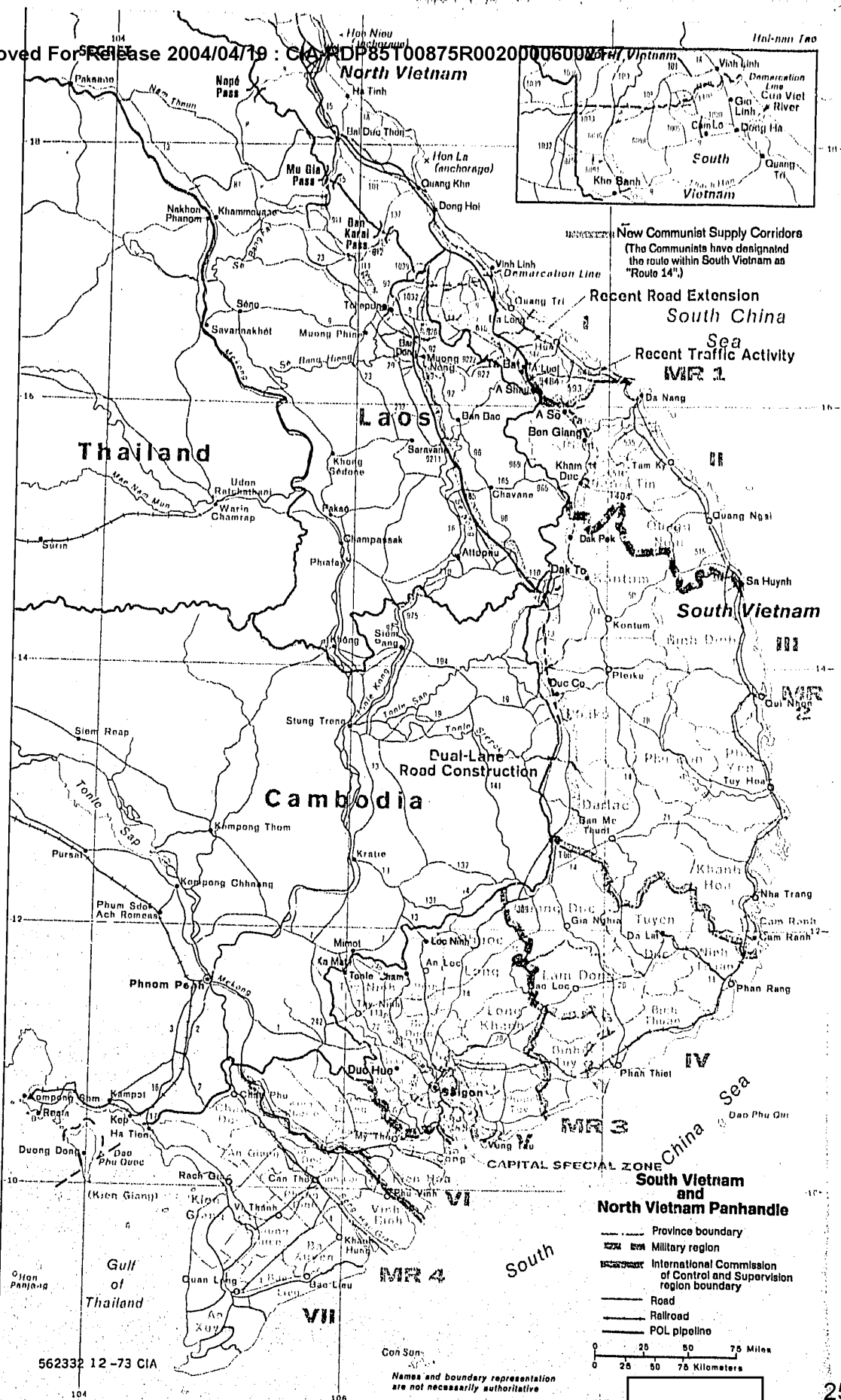
*Communist Ammunition Expenditures Surge
in Late July and Early August*

24. Reflecting the surge in tactical activity since mid-July, reported Communist ammunition expenditures in South Vietnam jumped to nearly 1,500 rounds daily for heavy weapons during the past four weeks,³ as shown in the following table. In contrast, Communist forces fired an average of only 430 heavy weapons rounds daily during the first six and one-half months of 1974. The expenditures of the past four weeks, however, remain considerably below those during the 1972 offensive, when Communist gunners fired several thousand rounds daily.

25. The recent upsurge in ammunition expenditures has been concentrated largely in MR 1, where roughly 60% of the countrywide total since mid-July have taken place. Despite their increased firings, however, the Communists remain reluctant to use their heavy guns - 122-mm and 130-mm field artillery pieces.

3. [redacted] are not necessarily complete. The figures, however, can be considered as a rough gauge of the level of fighting in South Vietnam.

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**Daily Communist Ammunition Expenditures
in South Vietnam, 1974¹**

Region	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul 1-15	Jul 16-Aug 12
Total	290	560	470	1,480
MR 1	50	170	70	890
MR 2	70	110	120	390
MR 3	100	200	190	120
MR 4	70	80	90	80

1. Including only artillery, mortar, rocket, and recoilless rifle rounds.

Most of their expenditures continue -- as they have since the 1973 cease-fire -- to be mortar, rockets, and the lighter 105-mm artillery shells.

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May HES Results

27. The population control situation in South Vietnam changed very little during May, according to the most recent Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) results. At the end of the month, about 82% of the country's total population (20 million) was living in government-controlled areas -- virtually the same proportion as in April. Moreover, there was no overall shift in the percentage of people living in contested (15%) and Communist-controlled (3%) regions. MR 3 continued to show the greatest degree of government control (93% of its population) and MR 1, the least (63%).

28. On the province level, sparsely populated Phu Bon in MR 2 showed the largest increase in government control (13 percentage points), primarily as a result of aggressive Regional and Popular Force activity in rural areas. MR 4's Kien Tuong

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Province registered the sharpest decline (10 points) - directly attributable to the NVA attacks directed against population centers. In coastal Binh Dinh, increased Communist military initiatives caused a loss in government control of almost 40,000 persons, most of whom came under Communist domination.

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ANNEX B

STATUS OF MILITARY FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. During the past few weeks, Communist tactical activity in northern South Vietnam surged to the highest level of the year, and other indicators have suggested even sharper attacks will occur. Even so, the Communists probably have not decided to launch an offensive approaching the scale of their April 1972 effort. Several other important indicators normally associated with such an effort are lacking, including heavy, sustained personnel infiltration from North Vietnam to most areas, the movement of NVA divisions to South Vietnam, and Communist directives or propaganda suggesting dramatic escalations in military activity. It is probable, however, that the type of fighting seen recently in Quang Nam Province will increase and spread to other areas. A summary of the situation and outlook in each military region follows.

Military Region 1

2. Thus far, the heaviest fighting has been concentrated in Quang Nam Province, where both sides have sent large reinforcements since the initial Communist attacks in mid-July. The Communists have now committed their 2d Infantry Division and at least two additional regiments, the 29th Regiment of the 324B Division and the newly formed 36th Regiment, subordinate to VC MR 5. Total NVA regular combat forces in the province now number some 18,000 men.

Other evidence indicates that the 304th Division is destined for Quang Nam and that some elements have already arrived.

3. To counter the Communist campaign, the South Vietnamese MR 1 commander has moved the 4th Regiment of the ARVN 2d Division north from Quang Ngai Province and the 54th Regiment of the ARVN 1st Division south from Thua Thien Province into the Quang Nam battlefield. They join the three regiments of the ARVN 3d Division, which together with supporting ranger and local forces bore the brunt of the initial Communist attacks. In addition, the Airborne Brigade, recently assigned to Saigon, has been recalled to MR 1, and another Airborne Brigade is being shifted to Da Nang from northern MR 1. These reinforcements will raise to 32,000 the total number of government regular combat troops in Quang Nam Province.

4. Despite some initial Communist success in Quang Nam, including the capture of one district capital, ARVN has performed well thus far and now appears

to have taken the steam from the Communist drive. The government's efforts in Quang Nam Province, however, have weakened its positions in both northern and southern MR 1 and also have deprived these areas of most of their reserve forces.

5. There are some signs that the Communists are preparing further tests of ARVN's defensive capabilities in MR 1. For example, in early July the NVA increased its threat to the area west of Hue, augmenting its forces there with two infantry and one artillery regiments. The NVA now has a total of 20,000 regular combat troops in six infantry, three artillery, and one armor regiments in Thua Thien Province and another 9,000 men in two infantry and three artillery regiments nearby in eastern Quang Tri Province. Manning the defense perimeter of Hue, the ARVN has a total of 32,000 regular combat troops, including one Marine Brigade, one Airborne Brigade, and three regiments of the ARVN 1st Division -- one Airborne Brigade and one infantry regiment fewer than they had several weeks ago. In adjacent parts of Quang Tri Province, however, there are still another 13,000 marines in two brigades and 3,000 men in regional forces who probably would participate in any activity threatening Hue.

7. Should the Communists fully commit the 304th Division in Quang Nam and simultaneously open a second front west of Hue, the ARVN would be hard-pressed to keep the NVA out of population centers along the coast. Barring the commitment of additional Communist forces from reserve units in North Vietnam, however, ARVN defenses probably would prove adequate in preventing the Communists from seizing and holding major population centers.

8. In southern MR 1, the Communists have already taken advantage of the withdrawal of the 4th Regiment from Quang Ngai Province by overrunning several government positions. As in northern MR 1, ARVN defenses here are spread thin. They consist primarily of the 5th and 6th Regiments of the ARVN 2d Division and one ranger group, who are opposed by the NVA 52d Brigade and Communist local forces.

Military Region 2

9. A situation similar to that in MR 1 appears to be developing in MR 2. In late July the government's commander in MR 2 moved the 45th Regiment of the ARVN 23d Division north from Darlac Province to the area north of Kontum City in response to a round of NVA attacks there. He also deployed the 42d

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Regiment of the ARVN 22d Division eastward from Pleiku to Binh Dinh Province as the NVA 3d Division and supporting units launched a drive there against government positions along Route 1. Although the situation in northern Kontum is now under control and ARVN commanders are also confident they have sufficient forces in Binh Dinh to push back Communist units, a major Communist threat is developing southwest of Pleiku City, where government defenses have been weakened by the redeployments. Several ranger bases have come under sharp attack since the beginning of August, [REDACTED]

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11. The Communists currently have a total of 21,000 regular combat forces in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces, including the NVA 10th and 320th Divisions and one independent infantry, three antiaircraft, two artillery, and one armor regiments. Government regulars now number some 36,000 men, primarily in five regiments of the ARVN 22nd and 23rd Divisions and four ranger groups. The Communists' strategy in the highlands apparently is to eliminate a number of government outposts on the fringe of ARVN's control, forcing ARVN to draw its defenses around Kontum and Pleiku Cities into a tighter circle. Given the present balance of forces, the Communists probably can capture some of the government's weaker positions and possibly position their forces for heavier attacks some time in the future.

Military Region 3

12. In MR 3 the Communists apparently are also preparing their forces for increased tactical activity. [REDACTED]
COSVN intends to initiate and maintain a fairly high level of activity in MR 3 through the fall. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] ARVN
postponed plans to deploy a regiment and ranger group from Tay Ninh City to Binh Duong Province, where the NVA 9th Division is operating.

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13. Communist combat forces in MR 3, [] total 41,000 men, including three infantry and one antiaircraft divisions. Government regular combat forces in MR 3 number some 94,000 men in three infantry divisions and a large number of supporting regional units (see the order of battle map).

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14. Any future activity in MR 3 probably would mainly involve the 7th and 9th Divisions, supported by the 5th Division in Tay Ninh. The 9th Division currently is deployed along Route 7 in Ben Cat District, and units of the 75th Artillery Command have been tasked to provide support. The 9th Division is opposed by four ARVN regiments from the 25th, 5th, and 18th Divisions. []

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[] East of Saigon, additional pressure could come from the NVA 33d and 274th Independent Regiments in Phuoc Tuy Province.

15. Although Communist units under COSVN have not yet launched an intensified series of attacks, likely goals possibly could be to recapture An Dien, to attack ARVN forces along Routes 13, 1A, and 16 in Binh Duong and Bier Hoa Provinces, and to capture some population centers, interdict lines of communications, and capture resettlement areas in Phuoc Tuy. Given the present balance of forces, however, ARVN should contain the threat.

Military Region 4

16. While indications throughout the rest of the country show Communist plans and activities aimed at a renewed round of attacks, there are no such indicators in MR 4. Military activity is, therefore, expected to remain for several months at the low level normally associated with the rainy season in the Delta.

17. At present the Communists have approximately 22,000 combat troops in MR 4 opposed by three ARVN Divisions and supporting units totaling about 97,000. The expected low level of fighting and the disposition of forces in MR 4 would allow the ARVN to redeploy one division to MR 3 - if the situation there worsened - without seriously affecting its defensive posture.

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